

# Here's to Paint in Your !

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**L**et's begin this article by asking you—the reader—a simple question, “What is paint?” The only correct answer is “a chemical.” That's right: Paint is a chemical, which—if you check the material safety data sheet (MSDS)—means you must wear personal protective equipment when you use it.

A continuing problem seen during shipboard safety surveys indicates many Sailors using paint lack both knowledge and adequate supervision. They also aren't wearing prescribed PPE and continuously are getting paint in their eyes. A major problem—yes—but one easily fixed.

The first step is for supervisors and those under their charge to avoid mishaps by becoming familiar with the MSDS for the paint to be used and to wear PPE. Chapter B3 in OpNav Instruction 5100.19D (with change one) also delineates supervisors' responsibilities for working with hazardous material. They include making sure that approved personal protective clothing and equipment are used, and that the equipment is maintained in good condition, and replaced or repaired as required.

Supervisors also must make sure Sailors are trained beforehand how to handle and work with hazmat. They also should know the MSDS contents and be aware of any potential hazards of the hazmat with which they'll be working. Sailors also must know where to find the MSDS in case they need to review it. Anyone who is in doubt about working with hazmat or who has questions should get clarification before tackling any work involving hazmat: Don't be embarrassed to ask for help.

Meanwhile, below are some examples of required PPE when working with hazmat. Read the MSDS, OpNav Instruction 5100.19D, and shipboard instructions for the requirements of specific work with which you'll be involved.

- Splash-proof chemical goggles, commonly known as the non-vented type. They keep paint from splashing into the eyes.
- Chemical-resistant (Nitrile) gloves, not latex medical gloves. Gloves prevent chemical irritants

from getting onto skin.

- Respirators could be required, depending on whether you're painting outside of or within the skin of the ship. Inside painting requires an air-purifying, fitted half-mask or full-face respirator—during and after painting—unless air-monitoring indicates vapor or mist levels are below applicable NAVOSH levels. Always follow the respirator manufacturer's directions for use. Ventilation also is required to disperse gases or vapors to weather decks, using blowout (forced exhaust) ventilation or with natural ventilation like open doors and hatches. If an atmosphere is potentially flammable or explosive, only explosion-proof fans shall be used for blowout ventilation.

Other rules and precautions can be found in the Navy Occupational Safety and Health Program Manual for Forces Afloat, and learning resources are available at <http://www.norva.navy.mil/navosh>.<sup>®</sup>

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